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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Thursday, September 27, 1934.

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "Concerning So-Called Reducing Agents." Information from Food and Drug Administration, U. S. Department of Agriculture.

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The other day I received a letter from a lady who asks about "reducing agents." She says she'd like to lose about twenty-five pounds, but she wants a quicker method of reducing than the old reliable one of following a diet. She admits that she hasn't much will power. She always begins a reducing diet with good resolutions to keep it up, but she falls by the wayside every time she sees a big piece of chocolate pie with whipped cream.

Well, the best way we can help the lady is to tell her about some of the popular reducing agents, and let her decide what to do. All the information I'm giving you today comes from the Federal Food and Drug Administration, which keeps a watchful eye on foods and drugs claimed to be weight reducers.

In fact, I believe the Food and Drug Administration would rather see us a little over weight, and in good health, than have us try to lose weight by means of some of the reducing agents I could mention. You see, the Food and Drug officials know what's in these reducing agents -- sometimes they contain dangerous compounds.

Of course, all of us who are inclined to be plumpish, and to relish three square meals a day, read with a certain degree of longing such statements as these: "Lose Weight Where You Want to Lose," "How to Lose Fat a Pound a Day on a Full Stomach," "How I Lost Sixty-two Pounds of Ugly Fat in Three Months." Another intriguing line is this: "Fat Jane Becomes Slim Jane." Or, "Melt Away Your Stomach Fat."

It seems to be the common wish of all -- the slim and the average and the "stylish stouts" -- to be more slender than we are. Men, too, yearn to exchange their bay-window figures for the neat lines of an athlete. One of the biggest promoters of reducing agents addresses a good many of his words exclusively to men.

But what about these reducing agents? Are they any good? Do they reduce? And if so, are they safe?

While the Food and Drug Administration has by no means full authority to deal with foods and drugs that claim to be weight reducers, it has learned a good bit about them. For instance, officials cite a fat reducer, "Stardom's Hollywood Diet," that was seized under the Federal Food and Drugs Act just a few weeks ago. (By the way, I've had some inquiries about this product.)

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The label states: "A beautiful figure need no longer be a matter of birth-days. The possibility of your having an exciting type of Hollywood figure is now so real as to be actually breath-taking, and to gain it you won't have to go hungry, engage in violent exercises, use drugs or resort to laxatives; all of these methods are taboo."

Now, doesn't that sound just wonderful? It almost -- but not quite -- takes our breath away! Indeed, as the label so nicely phrases it -- "the dawn of a new era in weight control"!

What is this product that practically guarantees "an exciting type of Hollywood figure" for each and every one of us? Well, the chemists in the Food and Drug Administration -- being practical men, and not believing in magic -- analyzed "Stardom's Hollywood Diet" and this is what they found: Sugar, soy bean flour, cocoa, and table salt. Seven ounces for two dollars. That means 13 cents worth of common ingredients at more than ten times their ordinary cost.

Now I know that if this mixture would actually reduce weight, a good many people would knowingly and willingly spend two dollars -- or even two hundred dollars -- for thirteen cents worth of sugar, soybean flour, cocoa, and table salt. But will it reduce?

Here's how it works. You stop eating all the good meals that you enjoy and that have made you weigh what you do, and take the soy bean flour and cocoa mixture instead. Naturally, when you are not eating so much you are not putting on so much weight. Indeed, you are likely to be using up some of the fat that your body has stored away for such periods of famine, and your weight goes down. If it goes down rapidly, your health will suffer. You are not conscious of being hungry, because this warm, tasty drink keeps your stomach from feeling unpleasantly empty and neglected. And that's all there is to the preparation which claims to work such wonders.

As I said before, the Food and Drug Administration seized this product. The label promised too much -- and labels must tell the truth. That's the law. The label on this particular product promised "The Dawn of a New Era in Fat Control" -- and a lot of other pleasant things. The Holly Diet Corporation of Chicago, distributors of this material, suffered seizure of its product in Detroit, Buffalo, Rochester, and Syracuse, and the Government has charged that the use of this product would not result in the disappearance of surplus avoirdupois as promised, nor would it develop a sylph-like figure.

Now as to all the different kinds and combinations of salts -- usually Epsom salts -- which are sold as fat reducers. The Food and Drug officials find these products less harmful than some of the drug remedies, but still not good for you. They create the unhealthful laxative habit, and a daily dose of carthartics -- which is all these salt products are -- is not good for us.

Whenever you buy a product sold to reduce weight, it will pay you to read the label, for the label must tell the truth.

Next week I shall give you more facts, about a group of new and dangerous drugs used in the "reducing racket."

